

5/16/2016

To: Instructional Quality Commission
Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division (CFIRD)
California Department of Education
1430 N Street, Room 3207, Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: History–Social Science Framework for California Public Schools

We write to you as California K-12 public school educators and teacher educators committed to a better history and social science curriculum. As educators, we are the ones who will be putting the curriculum framework into practice. While individuals and lobby groups have provided substantial input on how South Asian histories should be taught, the voices of educators are equally important.

We want to thank the Department of Education for its work to improve the curriculum and make it a fair, accurate, inclusive and respectful experience for our students. We know this is a difficult process, and that staff is doing its best under the circumstances.

It's critical to have a curriculum that's grounded in the facts, based on the best available scholarship. **We appreciate the Instructional Quality Commission's decision to approve most of the edits from the South Asia Faculty Group**, the diverse group of South Asia scholars who have worked to provide accuracy and nuance.

Some of the IQC-approved South Asia Faculty Group edits that we particularly appreciate include:

- Edit 2544: include more details on the rights of women in Indian society
- Edit 2560: help students compare early kingdoms in India and China
- Edit 2736: help students understand the Hindu bhakti movement

We also appreciate the IQC's leadership in rejecting many unhelpful edits, including:

- Edit 2437: would have renamed the Harappa civilization as the "Sindh-Saraswati" civilization, a peculiar nonstandard term largely rejected by scholars
- Edit 2533: would have removed a helpful explanation of how systems like caste aren't unique to South Asia
- Edit 2844: would have removed context for why the Sikh religion was founded

We see two red flags in the curriculum framework that we would like addressed.

(1) First, it is incredibly confusing to teach from textbooks that keep flipping back and forth between terms like "India," "Ancient India," and "India (South Asia)." **We would like the IQC**

to consult with the South Asia scholars for a clear, consistent, and respectful naming standard that echoes scholarly usage.

We teach students of various South Asian national origins, including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. We are concerned that subsuming all South Asian history into the single word “India” is both disrespectful and exclusionary to our students. (This would be somewhat analogous to telling our students of Mexican origin that the history of Mexico is actually “United States” history.) We realize that names are contentious and emotional, and we hope the guidelines will consider the need for inclusivity.

(2) Second, as teachers, we have a responsibility to avoid teaching disrespectful cultural terms. When discussing the caste system in South Asia, the curriculum guidelines use only the word “Untouchable,” rather than “Dalit.”

“Dalit” is the self-chosen term for the roughly 200 million Dalit people of South Asia, as well as of Dalit students and parents in California. **We would like the IQC to reinsert the word “Dalit” into the curriculum framework, so students can learn culturally appropriate terms.**

Thank you again for your work on the guidelines. Because of our teaching commitments, most of us are unable to attend weekday in-person meetings in Sacramento, but we hope that you will take this input into consideration as you proceed.

Sincerely,

Ruchi Rangnath

Bay Area teacher educator

Vice President, National Association for Multicultural Education (CA chapter)

Rick Ayers

Assistant Professor, Teacher Education

University of San Francisco

Milton Reynolds

Bay Area educator and activist

(titles for identification purposes only)

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4. Andrew Pat, Alameda County
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